

Domaine du Pavillon de Chavannes

Côte de Brouilly

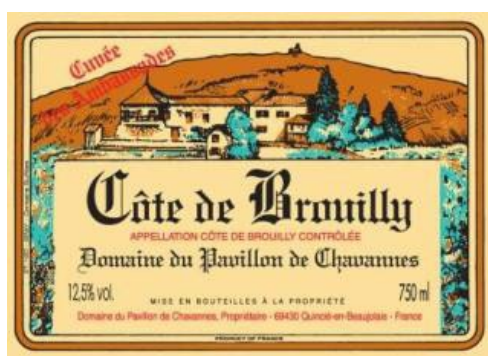


Sans le Beaujolais, la France ne serait pas tout à fait la France.

-Raymond Dumay, Guide du Vin 1967

This remains one of my absolutely favorite examples of Côte de Brouilly in the appellation and the wine deserves to be even better known.

-John Gilman, View from the Cellar, issue 85, 2020



Mont Brouilly rises to a height of nearly 1,600 feet, a lonely thumb of an old volcano sticking out of a plain, the first such geological skyscraper to be encountered as you drive west from the River Saône into this southern section of the Haut Beaujolais. It marks the beginning of the Beaujolais hills, and Laure Jambon-Mareau's father Paul Jambon grew up in its shadow. (Indeed, as a boy in 1944 he cowered with his mother in Pavillon's basement as German flankers, protecting the main column retreating north along the Saône, marched by on the road below and fired at partisans in the forest above--

one of their shells pierced the trunk of a cherry tree a dozen feet away, and that tree can be seen in the final photo below over Laure's left shoulder. It perished in 2021.)

The Roman cultivated vines on Mont Brouilly's steep slopes, and almost certainly vines to one extent or another have been raised here ever since. Its crown is forested, much like the crown of Corton along the Côte d'Or. The summit was once part of Jambon's Domaine du Pavillon de Chavannes and was donated for the construction of the Chapel of our Lady of Brouilly, built to celebrate the victory over downy mildew (a fungus which wreaked havoc in Europe's vineyards upon the heels of phylloxera—both American exports, along with those other two vine scourges, black rot and powdery mildew, or oidium).

Philip the Bold issued his famous 14th century edict banning Gamay from the Côte d'Or and limiting it to Beaujolais with good reason—the grape makes far better wine growing in the Haut Beaujolais' granite hillsides than it does in the Côte d'Or's limestone escarpment (limestone Gamay is usually rustic stuff). But of course, not all granite is equal, especially if, like Mont Brouilly and Morgon's Côte du Py, the terroir is granite and schist with andesite—that "blue granite" for which both sites are famous--thrown into the mix. This mixture, combined with the elevation (AOC Côte de Brouilly is confined to the upper, better ripening vineyards; AOC Brouilly is lower, and, as the biggest of the Beaujolais crus, far larger), largely accounts for Côte de Brouilly's highly scented and finely—finely is

the adjective that comes to mind—concentrated wines. This profile is particularly apparent in the wines of Pavillon de Chavannes because many of its vines are among the highest *and* the steepest in this elevated appellation. It helps too that winemaking at this domaine is traditional and simple, with little extraction in the modern sense (Pavillon's wine could well be labeled the antithesis of modern extracted power). The alcoholic fermentation is done in concrete vats, and until the 2015 vintage was racked into old *foudre* for aging. Nowadays, it mostly sees *élevage* in concrete vats (a small percentage is aged in older Burgundy barrels).

Pavillon de Chavannes was acquired by the Jambon-Chanrion family in 1861. Its history became intertwined with that of Château Thivin when Yvonne Chanrion married Claude Geoffray shortly after the First World War. Claude had inherited Thivin, then a small estate. Yvonne took with her one-third of her family's highly regarded vineyards as an inheritance. Over the years, Yvonne and Claude added to Thivin's holdings with other land purchases, but the couple never bore children. Yvonne outlived her husband, and upon her death in 1987 her original inheritance reverted to Paul Jambon of the Jambon-Chanrion family, along with fifty percent of the land Yvonne and Claude had purchased over the course of their marriage. The remainder of the Thivin holdings went to Claude's great nephew, also named Claude. Nephew Claude further inherited vineyards from his immediate family, enabling him to maintain Thivin's volume.

The Art Deco wine label, created in the 1930s, was a product of that marriage. After Yvonne's death and the restoration of the Chavanne vineyards, this label became joint property, and now it is used by both domaines under their respective names.

For quite some time, Paul and Betty Jambon managed the domaine and its altogether traditional ways. In 2018, Paul's daughter Laure quit her professional career in Paris to take up the reins. This involved a two-year course in enology and viticulture, but even so midway through she made the 2019 vintage with help from Paul, Betty, their cousin Nicole Chanrion (who has her own domaine), and the domaine's long standing consulting enologist.

With two friends in 2019, Laure purchased a six-acre parcel of old vines on the north side of the Côte de Brouilly, high enough that one corner touches the crowning forest. The entity with the two friends is such that the lower 2.5 acres are reserved for the Cuvée des Ambassades, while the remainder of the parcel is reserved for a new cuvée named Les Bertaudières, after the parcel. The lower end has somewhat deeper soils, giving a less tannic wine and fitting in well with the Ambassades profile. Vintage 2020 was the first where this fruit was blended into Ambassades, which historically came entirely from vines on the western side of Côte de Brouilly.

Today, the domaine farms a total of 12 acres, of which 7 are parcels averaging 40 years of age that are reserved for the Cuvée des Ambassades. The name comes from the fact that this wine has long been--and continues to be--purchased by the Quai d'Orsay for use in certain French embassies.